

1.0 PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE PROPOSED ACTION

1.1 Introduction

The United States Army Garrison, Alaska (USAG-AK) is proposing to install fencing along portions of the Fort Richardson military installation boundary and cantonment area. This proposed project involves securing the installation boundary, the Glenn Highway corridor that penetrates Fort Richardson, and the cantonment area by installing new fencing in some areas where none exists and by replacing existing fencing that has been damaged or does not meet the established purpose and need.

1.2 Purpose and Need

Installing a perimeter fence along portions of the Fort Richardson boundary and cantonment area would:

(1) Delineate the Fort Richardson installation boundary to alert the public that it is intentionally or unintentionally entering military training land. USAG-AK requires that individuals seek legal access using appropriate procedures for their own safety. Boundary demarcation would reduce the likelihood of safety issues for those seeking recreational opportunities.

(2) Deter both vehicle and pedestrian trespassers. Additionally, the fence would help reduce other illegal activities occurring on USAG-AK property such as poaching and illegal dumping. These activities result in considerable time and expense to prevent such illegal actions and to cleanup damage caused to the environment.

(3) Reduce the cantonment area's vulnerability to unauthorized vehicular and pedestrian intrusion and protect resources necessary for National Defense.

(4) Allow soldiers to train to standard safely and efficiently by reducing the number of military guards posted along training area boundaries during a training event. Reducing the number of guards would optimize army training events by allowing more troops to participate.

If fencing were not provided, the Command would be unable to effectively provide the necessary level of training and safety for soldiers, define boundary delineation of the training areas for public safety, or reduce trespassing and other illegal activities. If the fencing project is not implemented, the installation would remain vulnerable to unauthorized intrusion (either intentional or unintentional) and associated public safety risks.

1.3 Objectives

Objectives for the proposed action include the following:

- Demarcate boundary of the training area for public safety.
- Deter both vehicle and pedestrian trespassing and associated illegal activity.
- Protect cantonment area resources necessary for National Defense.
- Train soldiers to standard safely and efficiently.

These objectives are required under the guidance of the Fort Richardson Physical Security Plan, which is part of the larger, overall Department of the Army Anti-Terrorism and Force Protection Program. These objectives are the minimum standards that the proposed action must meet and form the basis of USAG-AK's range of reasonable alternatives to be analyzed in this Environmental Assessment (EA).

1.4 Scope of Environmental Analysis and Decision to Be Made

This environmental assessment considers direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of the proposed action and alternatives, including the No Action Alternative. It was prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 [42 USC 4321 *et seq.*], regulations promulgated by the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) [40 CFR Parts 1500-1508], and the *Environmental Effects of Army Actions* [32 CFR Part 651]. A specific requirement for this EA is an appraisal of impacts of the proposed installation fencing, including a determination of whether or not a Finding of No Significant Impact (FNSI) is appropriate or whether a Notice of Intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is required.

The proposed installation of a boundary fence at Fort Richardson, Alaska, is the focus of this EA. The scope of this EA includes a discussion of potential impacts to those resources identified during the public scoping period. Resource categories identified and analyzed for the proposed action and alternatives include:

- Air Quality
- Soils and Vegetation
- Water Resources and Wetlands
- Fisheries
- Wildlife
- Public Access and Recreation
- Infrastructure
- Fire Management
- Cultural Resources
- Environmental Justice
- Socioeconomics
- Aesthetics

This EA will provide the decision-maker, the Commander, USAG-AK, with the information necessary to evaluate the environmental and cultural impacts associated with the proposed action and its alternatives. The selection of the preferred alternative will take into account technical, economic, environmental, and community concerns, and the ability to meet the proposed action objectives. The following range of alternatives has been evaluated for presentation to the decision-maker:

- Alternative 1 (No Action): Existing Fencing
- Alternative 2: Pipe Rail and Full Cantonment Security Fencing

- Alternative 3: High Security Fencing
- Alternative 4: Setback Fencing

This fencing project is included as a future potential project in the Fort Richardson Physical Security Plan. All physical security measures including anti-terrorism and force protection are included in that plan. An economic analysis has also been prepared and was utilized in evaluating this project. The proposed action is the most cost effective method to satisfy security and anti-terrorism requirements.

1.5 Interagency Coordination

State, federal, and tribal organizations were notified of USAG-AK's intent to install installation fencing at Fort Richardson. Governmental agencies and tribal organizations listed below were contacted for identification of potential impacts of the proposed action:

- Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation
- Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Office of Habitat Management
- Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Division of Forestry
- Alaska Department of Fish and Game
- Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities
- Bureau of Land Management
- Alaska Fire Service
- Federal Emergency Management Agency
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- Municipality of Anchorage
- Alaska Railroad Corporation
- Chickaloon Native Village
- Knik Tribe
- Native Village of Eklutna

All interagency comments received have been compiled and are part of this document's Planning Record. Comments were considered during the analysis of the proposed action and are further described in Section 1.7.

1.6 Public Scoping

NEPA requires an early and open process to inform the public of a proposed action and to identify significant issues related to the action. This process is termed "scoping". USAG-AK published a Notice of Availability (NOA) in the *Anchorage Daily News* (August 8, 13, 20, 27, 31 and September 3 and 7, 2003) announcing the beginning of the public comment period for the Draft Installation Fencing EA. In response to considerable public interest, USAG-AK held two meetings regarding the proposed action where informational presentations were made and public testimony was taken. Over 330 verbal and written comments were received during the 30-day public comment period.

In addition, meetings with personnel from local, state, and federal government agencies and several stakeholder groups were also conducted. All comments received have been compiled into a scoping summary, which is part of this document's Planning Record.

1.7 Public Scoping Issues of Concern

Verbal and written comments received during the scoping period from the public and the various agencies were used to help determine specific issues of concern. Potential issues were determined to be significant to the analysis of the proposed action if they fell within the scope of the proposed action, if they suggested different actions or mitigation, or if they influenced the decision on the proposed action. Solutions responsive to many of the public's concerns and questions were integrated into elements of the alternatives developed for consideration in this EA. Based on public and agency comments, USAG-AK focused analysis in this EA on the following categories:

- **Purpose and Need:** A clearer definition of purpose and need for construction of a boundary fence at Fort Richardson
- **Fence Design and Placement:** The overall design and placement of the boundary fence at Fort Richardson.
- **Recreational Access:** Impacts to existing year-round access to Fort Richardson and surrounding recreation areas resulting from the construction of a boundary fence
- **Wildlife Movement:** Impacts to wildlife movement, especially moose migration, across Fort Richardson

Impact analysis was completed for each relevant issue to determine the environmental consequences of the alternatives and is discussed in Chapter 3, Description of the Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action and Alternatives. USAG-AK has identified additional mitigation measures to address the concerns raised by state and local governmental agencies, stakeholders, and the general public.

2.0 DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

USAG-AK is proposing to install fencing along the Fort Richardson military installation boundary to provide boundary delineation, prevent vehicular trespass and illegal activity, protect resources necessary for National Defense, and to provide soldiers with an increased opportunity to safely and efficiently train to standard.

The existing Fort Richardson fencing is discontinuous along the boundary and utilizes several fence designs that provide varying degrees of boundary demarcation and security. Currently, soldiers are used as guards along the boundary, which reduces their participation in training events.

USAG-AK currently estimates that fencing is needed along the eastern boundary of Fort Richardson, beginning in the northernmost portion of Fort Richardson along Knik Arm, running